



Testimony of

**Sal Luciano, President
Connecticut AFL-CIO**

Government Administration & Elections Committee
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***SB 753 An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for Purposes of
Determining Legislative Districts***

Good morning Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and members of the Government Administration & Elections Committee. My name is Sal Luciano, and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 220,000 members in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on SB 753 An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for Purposes of Determining Legislative Districts.

When conducting the decennial census, the United States Census Bureau counts incarcerated persons as residents of the town where they are confined, not of the town where they lived before incarceration. Such method dramatically distorts redistricting, which determines political representation at state and local levels. This practice is known as “prison gerrymandering.”

Prison gerrymandering harms both incarcerated people and residents of their home communities, with a disproportionate impact on people of color. By counting incarcerated people in the prison towns where they have no connections, prison gerrymandering effectively denies incarcerated people meaningful representation. At the same time, prison gerrymandering unfairly inflates the population and political power of districts in which prisons are located.

Prison gerrymandering has a pronounced racial effect because most state prisons are located in rural areas that are overwhelmingly white and most incarcerated persons come from racially diverse urban areas and are Black or Latinx. These residents receive proportionately less representation, political power, and influence than those in prison districts.

Prison gerrymandering violates the U.S. Constitution’s “one person, one vote” standard. It is also inconsistent with Connecticut law, which treats incarcerated people who are eligible to vote as residents of their home communities for voting purposes. Ten states have enacted legislation to end this practice. SB 753 would allow Connecticut to become the eleventh state to prohibit prison gerrymandering.

With redistricting imminent, the 2021 legislative session is the last opportunity of the decade to end prison gerrymandering and ensure Connecticut’s residents are counted and represented fairly.

We urge the Committee to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.